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## BOOK REVIEWS.

LECTURES ON THE ETHICS OF T. H. GREEN, MR. HERBERT SPENCER, AND JAMES MARTINEAU. By Henry Sidgwick. London: Macmillan & Co., 1902. Pp. xli, 374.

It was Professor Sidgwick's custom, in recent years, in his ethical lectures in Cambridge, not to take his students over the ground already traversed in his larger works, but to engage in exposition and criticism of current influential types of ethical theory which were not dealt with at any length, or not dealt with at all, in the "Methods of Ethics." "It appeared to me," he says, "that having already expounded my own system in my book, what I could further do in the way of making it clear would be best done in the form of a criticism on the views of others."

The present volume contains three courses of Lectures, eight on Green (Pp. 1-131), ten on Spencer (Pp. 135-312), and four on Martineau (Pp. 315-374). They are printed substantially as they were delivered, and have been prepared for the press by Miss E. E. C. Jones of Girton College, who has also prepared an analytical Table of Contents. That the book deserves the careful attention of all students of ethics need hardly be said; and for those who personally attended these lectures, the volume will have a more special interest as recalling a privilege and intellectual delight which they will not soon forget.

Within the limits of this review we can only refer, with occasional comments, to some of the more significant points in the various lines of criticism which are here developed.

## I.

The examination of Martineau's "Idiopsychological" theory of ethics is specially instructive as regards some of the peculiarities of Sidgwick's own view. The whole work ("Types of Ethical Theory") was rather severely reviewed by Sidgwick in the tenth volume of *Mind*, and the appearance of this review was followed by an interesting discussion between the two thinkers in the same journal; but in reality there is less fundamental divergence between Sidgwick and Martineau than between Sidgwick and Green or Spencer.

The real character of Martineau's and of every ethical theory

comes to light when we consider its answer to the question, What is the Nature and Object of Moral Judgment? Martineau insists strongly that "what we judge is the inner spring of action as distinguished from its outward operation;" and by this principle he thinks that Utilitarianism,—or any theory whatever which seeks a standard in consequences, in the objective side of conduct,—is excluded as contrary to Common Sense and the Moral Consciousness. That this does not follow is evident when we notice that Martineau has omitted to make an important distinction. A spring of action may mean (*a*) the impulse to action, abstracted from all effects,—a blind propensity; (*b*) the desire for a certain result,—those effects *for which* the act is done; (*c*) the consciousness of the whole effects so far as the latter are foreseen,—and these may include some things *in spite of which* the act is done.

(*a*) As to the existence of these "blind" incentives, Sidgwick justly observes that though in the adult human being such spontaneities may occasionally operate, they cannot be at all intense or prolonged without calling up a representation of the consequences to which they prompt. They are residua or habits due to past fully conscious acts. Hence a comparison of such quasi-instinctive tendencies cannot be the normal form of the moral judgment.

(*b*) It may, however, be held that the normal object of the moral judgment is the desire which prompts the act,—the consciousness of the results for which it is done. Sidgwick recognizes the possibility of this view, and allows a limited validity to what he calls the standard of "Subjective Right;" but his view appears to be that this standard must be corrected and sometimes superseded by that of "Objective Right." He rejects the view (which we believe to be the true one) that when in moral judgment we deliberately go beyond the particular "desire for a certain result," it is not to consider further ranges of external results, but to consider the whole personal character out of which the desire arose. We hold that the desire must be judged as a fact of a personal character, and the effects which are desired must be judged as effects on other personal characters. Martineau makes the wholly unwarranted assumption—in which Sidgwick is of course at one with him—that the external effects, when morally judged, can be estimated only by their pleasure or pain value.

(c) Sidgwick's position is that the moral judgment is in the end not on persons acting but on things done; for while he says that it is always the choice or intention that is approved or disapproved, he also says that "the differences of choice or intention on which the moral judgment turns can only be conceived as differences in the objects chosen" (p. 337), "different sets of foreseen external effects, all of which are conceived to be within the power of the agent" (p. 336). Surely the logical outcome of this view is the ethical paradox that moral judgment is not on persons but on things; for what is judged, in this conception, is a series of events in the external world, on the condition that the first term in the series is a human volition; beyond this, the so-called "Subjective Right" confessedly makes no difference.

Another subject of central importance for Martineau is the nature of Moral Authority, which he holds to be conceivable only as that of "another Person," the Deity. It is very curious that, when discussing (in Book II, Chapter I, Section 2, of his "Study of Religion") one of the chief arguments of Professor Royce's "Religious Aspect of Philosophy," Martineau attributes to Professor Royce (and rejects) a view respecting the intellectual consciousness which is precisely similar to his own view respecting the moral consciousness. "I cannot see," he says, in answer to what he supposes to be Professor Royce's contention, "how it follows that if I am conscious of ignorance, 'Some One Else' must have perfect knowledge." Yet in his ethical theory he argues that because I am conscious of moral imperfection and of an obligation to be better, there must be "another Person," perfectly Holy, the source of the obligation. Now in a striking observation which Sidgwick quotes, he says that "whatever be the 'authority' of Reason respecting the True, the same is the 'authority' of Conscience respecting the Right and Good." It follows, as Sidgwick says, that in neither case is there any logical road to infer the existence of "another Person," but in both cases there is implied "a Universal Reason which the judging individual shares so far as he judges truly." Sidgwick's view is that the authority of Conscience is the authority of Reason in relation to practice, and adds "the 'authority' would not exist for me—except so far as the prudential obligation of obeying superior power goes—unless this Reason was *mine*, though not *merely* mine" (p. 346). But this recognition of the "Universal Reason" appears to be an empty ac-

knowledge; for the only "Universality" recognized is that of the similarity of numerically distinct individuals to one another. "Apprehending their similarity . . . I cannot avoid concluding that each of them has an ultimate Good similar to mine, and as valuable from the point of view of Universal Reason" (p. 347). The result is thus an abstract conception of an aggregate of "ends-in-themselves" merely similar to one another. Martineau in his comment on Green ("Types," vol. ii, 2d ed., p. 106) suggests conformity to the type of Perfect Humanity as the ultimate end; but Sidgwick does not regard this conception as admissible in ethics, owing to his paradoxical view that Perfection cannot be interpreted so as to include Moral Perfection.

It must be added that there are lines of thought in Martineau's theory which if developed would lead to results more satisfactory than the extreme individualism of the "Idiopsychological ethics."

## II.

The ten lectures on Mr. Spencer's ethical system are unique as a thoroughly searching and immanent criticism of one of the most influential theories of the nineteenth century. The purpose of Sidgwick's criticism is two-fold: to examine the extent to which Mr. Spencer accomplishes the end which he sets before himself, of establishing rules of conduct with certainty and exactness on a basis of physical science, and to examine whether the rules which he does establish can be known with a certainty unlike that which the Utilitarian can attain, who forms from experience his view of the "middle axioms" of morality. Sidgwick deals with the whole of Mr. Spencer's ethical system as expounded in its complete form in the "Principles of Ethics;" but the central portion of his discussion is in the first five lectures, which deal with the "Data of Ethics" (Part I of the "Principles of Ethics"), and the eighth and ninth, which deal with "Justice" (Part IV).

The troublesome preliminary question of the connection between "origin" and "validity" is not dealt with in a satisfactory manner either in this volume or in the "Methods of Ethics." In Bk. III, ch. I, of the latter work, it is argued that the question of origin is entirely distinct from that of validity, where validity signifies intellectual truth or trustworthiness; and hence

(Bk. III, ch. 13) that the ultimate ethical maxims, as conceived by Sidgwick, cannot be proved or disproved by theories of Evolution. Nevertheless on Sidgwick's own view the question of "origin and validity" in ethics is not to be settled in this simple manner; for in Bk. IV, ch. 4, it is argued that the theory of derivation does show the invalidity to some extent of the accepted rules of morality regarded as means to the attainment of the Utilitarian end. And in the present volume a more serious admission is made; the investigation of the ways in which the current ethical beliefs and sentiments have arisen does not necessarily tend to establish the authority of the morality of which it explains the existence—"indeed it has more often, I think, an effect of the opposite kind" (p. 137). It is further said that there is one result of Mr. Spencer's view concerning the "origin" of our present experience of ethical obligation, "of which he hardly sees the full gravity: a sentiment regarded as imported by association, and destined to disappear, cannot now coerce us much" (p. 174). [In this view Sidgwick agrees in the main with Green ("Prolegomena," section 8); see present volume, pp. 6, 7.] Obviously what is first of all required,—and rarely, if ever given,—is a criticism of the various possible meanings of the idea of Development or Evolution in Biology and Psychology (Individual and Social).

The reader will remember Mr. Spencer's general view that "scientific" consideration of conduct (1) shows us a supreme or ultimate end to the realization of which human actions are directed, and (2) enables us to determine the kind of conduct by which this end may be best attained. As regards the first point, Sidgwick observes that this view is doubly teleological: "We recognize that the external motions of living things are adjusted to a certain kind of end, viz.: life, the continuance of the adjustments themselves; and we find further that if we take a certain view of 'quantity of life,' if we estimate it not merely by duration, but consider quantity of change in a given time, this kind of end is more attained as evolution goes on: *i. e.*, the actions of the higher or later beings are more life-sustaining—provided we measure life in this way—than the actions of the lower" (p. 140). Sidgwick effectively contrasts this doubly teleological view with the forced avoidance of teleological implications in the "Principles of Biology," which was originally written before the publication of the Darwinian theory. The latter implied a new teleology of its own.

Spencer's language in chapters 1 and 2 of the "Data" suggests that increase in quantity of life is to be taken as the supreme ethical end. It is by no means so evident that the acts of living beings are so much directed to increase in breadth of life as to its increase in length: some evolutionary writers have taken length of life only as the end. We see further that Mr. Spencer does not consider the fundamental question, why—if Biology gives us a generalization as to the function of life—it follows that this is to be taken as the ethical end at all. But in ch. 3 he does not accept as final the view suggested in ch. 2; he points that it involves an assumption of great significance, that life brings a surplus of agreeable feeling. Thus the end seems to be quantity of agreeable feeling or pleasure. The transition is too easily made from the end as quantity of life, measured only in length and breadth, to the end as quantity of happiness. What Mr. Spencer is bound to show is the coincidence of the two ends, at least for practical purposes. Sidgwick's contention is, first, the general one that this coincidence cannot be scientifically proved; and also (as in the "Methods of Ethics," Bk. II, ch. 4) that no scientific theory of pleasure and pain, based on their connection in the course of evolution with actions preservative or destructive of the organism, is of any use for directing us how to act so as to obtain the greatest happiness. Hence Mr. Spencer's assertion of the superiority of his method to the uncertainties and difficulties of the Utilitarian "Induction" is groundless. The vagueness and inadequacy of the guidance afforded by his biological data are effectively shown. The "Sociological view" ("Data," ch. 8) does indeed supply certain rules which are permanent conditions of voluntary co-operation, but it is easy to see that they are not of a character to constitute "ethics as a science," in distinction from "empirical ethics."

Nevertheless Mr. Spencer's statement of the end becomes very suggestive if we abandon the conception of life as a mere set of physical or physiological functions, and regard it as *personal*. Then our end becomes the immanent increase and growth (in intensity and scope) of the functions constituting personality. This conception is of course altogether foreign to Sidgwick's point of view.

Mr. Spencer conceives the "origin" of our consciousness of obligation to result from a combination of earlier, not strictly moral, restraints with "that which is regarded as strictly moral."

But the difference between the latter and the former is not to be found, as Spencer suggests, in a difference of directness and proximity; nor can we treat as fundamental his distinction between artificial or factitious and natural or necessary consequences ("Data," ch. 7, section 44). "The essential difference is that in truly moral feeling, in the main, it is evil to others, sympathetically apprehended, that is influential" (p. 177). This brings us to the question of Egoism versus Altruism ("Data," ch. 11-14). After pointing out Mr. Spencer's fundamental misconception of English Utilitarianism (especially in ch. 13), Sidgwick observes: "The fact that there must be compromise between Egoism and Altruism does not determine the principle on which compromise is to be planned; for any individual here and now, the occasions of life may present alternative compromises—the compromise in which he pursues the happiness of others so far as consistent with his own, and the compromise in which he pursues his own happiness so far as it is consistent with maximum happiness generally. Mr. Spencer does not affirm that the two always coincide. . . . And if he does not, all his exposition of the growing implication of the interests of each with the interests of others, and of the ultimate conciliation of the two, does not relieve him of the necessity of answering the question of the individual here and now: which of the two alternative compromises am I to take? It may be said to me: How do *you* deal with it? My answer is, that unless we assume or prove the moral order of the world, there is a conflict between rational convictions. Do I assume it? Yes, practically, as a man; provisionally, and with due recognition of the need of proof, as a philosopher. The assumption is normal to reflective man, and a postulate of Common Sense" (pp. 187-8). A most instructive passage as regards Sidgwick's own position.

With respect to the distinction of Absolute and Relative ethics—(What is right for an individual to do in an Ideal Society? What is right for an individual to do here and now?) Sidgwick holds that Mr. Spencer tends to "reduce paradoxically the possibility of giving a definite answer to the second question. Spencer here adopts the Utilitarian standard exclusively. The Ideal State is one where all conduct produces "pleasure unalloyed by pain anywhere." Sidgwick argues that Absolute ethics, if attainable, would be useless, as by definition the ideal state is utterly unlike all actual states, or so unlike that we could



not argue from one to the other. But also, he adds, Absolute ethics cannot be considered possible, for we could not ascertain a priori the nature of the human beings composing such a society with sufficient definiteness and certainty to enable us to determine their code of conduct.

Granting the force of these criticisms, there is still in Spencer's argument the recognition of an important truth. Humanity is guided by an Ideal which is realizable and is being progressively realized. In the Ideal the Good of each becomes the Good of all. "Relative ethics" can *for us* be only a formulation in outline of that Ideal, based on the interpretation of the fundamental tendencies of the life that now is. And just because it is true that the Ideal is very partially and imperfectly realized, it is true that such ethical theory as we can now establish, appropriate to the present stage of moral evolution, must necessarily exhibit a lack of coherence and exactness.

Of the remaining lectures on the "Principles of Morality" we have left space only for a brief notice of the discussion of Mr. Spencer's formulæ of Justice (Lectures viii and ix). The main points are these. The preliminary investigation of "sub-human" Justice is held to be irrelevant and misleading. The formula of Justice afterwards adopted (that each individual must receive the benefits and evils of his own nature and consequent conduct) almost excludes family relations from the sphere of Justice. The effects of social life in modifying the operation of this law among human beings are seriously underestimated by Mr. Spencer. He assumes without proof that the necessity for subordinating the welfare of the individual to that of the species arises solely from War. He has no good ground on evolutionary principles for holding as he does that War must ultimately disappear. The formula is not "obviously that which recommends itself to the common apprehension as Just." When tracing the origin and growth of the sentiment and idea of Justice, Spencer gives what seems to be a definite statement of the principle which modifies the individualistic formula of Justice which he has previously stated. It assumes the form: "Every man is free to do what he wills, provided he infringe not the equal freedom of another man." From this formula he attempts to deduce various "rights." The vagueness of this conception of Justice is well illustrated in the manner in which it is applied to the question of the right of Property, and especially to the burning question of the right to the use of Land (pp. 282 ff).

## III.

The chief points dealt with in the criticism of Green are: Green's misrepresentation of Hume and his predecessors; his account (in the "Prolegomena") of Greek and particularly of Aristotelian Ethics; the metaphysical basis of his ethical theory, and his view of moral freedom; his criticism of Hedonism. What we miss—and this defect in Sidgwick's discussion seems to us to be a very serious one—is any appreciation of the merits or defects of Green's view of life as a whole.

Professor Sidgwick shows that Green does much less than justice to Hume; but Sidgwick himself certainly does much less than justice to Green's conception of the Aristotelian Ethics (Lecture vi). And that Green's criticism of Hedonism is inadequate may be fully admitted. As regards the remaining point, Sidgwick seems to us to show effectively that "assuming Green's metaphysical arguments valid, and his ethical view sound, there is a great logical gap to be filled up in passing from one to the other" (pp. 12-14). And this difficulty comes out not less in his account of freedom. The motive in human volition is what it is by the operation of a self-distinguishing consciousness which is not a part of Nature, and hence not a natural fact. But this is not sufficient to justify moral imputation and responsibility. The real question is, *why* does *A* make a virtuous choice, *B* a vicious choice? Granting that the adoption of the desired end is not a "natural" event; *A* and *B* make different adoptions of objects as their respective personal goods; *why* does this particularity occur? The character of depending on the Eternal Self-consciousness is common to all individuals alike, and even to inanimate Nature; hence in discussing the virtuousness or viciousness of this particular choice, we must treat it (the particular character of the choice) as due to a chain of natural causation. The "self-conscious, self-distinguishing agent" is present throughout and hence cannot make the vital ethical difference that is needed between human actions and natural events. We are led to a similar result when we consider the "Freedom of Man as Intelligence" of which Green speaks. The principle is that man is a "free cause" in so far as, in knowledge, his consciousness is identified with that of the Eternal. Granting that an act of human knowledge is not an event in time; it remains true that in human minds knowledge

is partial and changing; these limitations and changes are "details of the world" which have to be explained. Hence the "freedom of intelligence" is of no practical application to man; since the particularity of intelligence—i.e., *why* any particular mind or society knows *this* rather than *that*, *why so much* and *no more*—is wholly caused by natural events. *That* it knows at all may be due to its sharing in the Eternal; but the amount, extent, and direction of its knowledge is completely conditioned by natural causes. On Green's view of existence there seems no other means of accounting for the particularity of anything than by reference to the necessity of natural causation.

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THE ORIGIN OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF RIGHT AND WRONG. By Franz Brentano. English translation by Cecil Hague, Formerly Lector at Prague University, with a Biographical Note. Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co., Ltd. 1902. Pp. xiv, 125.

This is a far better discussion of the most fundamental principles of Ethics than any others with which I am acquainted. Brentano himself is fully conscious that he has made a very great advance in the theory of Ethics. "No one," he says, "has determined the principles of ethics as, on the basis of new analysis, I have found it necessary to determine them" (p. viii); and his confidence both in the originality and in the value of his own work is completely justified. In almost all points in which he differs from any of the great historical systems, he is in the right; and he differs with regard to the most fundamental points of Moral Philosophy. Of all previous moralists, Sidgwick alone is in any respect superior to him; and Sidgwick was never clearly aware of the wide and important bearings of his discovery in this one respect. Brentano is both clearer and more profound; and he avoids Sidgwick's two fundamental errors. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of his work.

His main proposition is that what we know, when we know that a thing is good in itself, is that the feeling of *love towards* that thing (or *pleasure in* that thing) is "*right*" (*richtig*). Similarly, that a thing is bad, is merely another way of saying that *hatred of* that thing would be "*right*."